

The Promise of Shanty Town: unknown suffering

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Shanty Town was an informal settlement in South Africa just before apartheid. This article is about life in this informal settlement. It is a discriptive peace of the fear, pain and suffering inflicted on it's residents

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Life in Shanty Town

Within my four cardboard walls, I cry. I cry tears of trepidation, fearing that winter may bring with it the icy stillness of death. My throat burns as I take a gasp of the rotten Shanty air. The air is heavy with odours of urine and waste. This is our very own hell. It tortures me slowly. I cry below my wilted tin roof for hours, but no one will come to see if I am safe, because they fear it too. They fear the pain that Shanty Town brings with its darkness. They fear the rape, the violence and the murder. What happened to the promise of Shanty Town? This valley once held a deep tranquillity and our eyes could stretch to the unreachable horizon. But now, the green trees have turned to black tin, the rivers have turned to rock and the once blue skies are now shadowed by the heavy black clouds that were created by our dismay. I lie awake at night. I can hear my neighbour breathing heavily, the baby across the way cry and the footsteps of torturers parading the thin alleys, hungry for our souls. I can hear the millions of heartbeats in Shanty town echoing through the tin walls. As summer approaches my skin goes dry, and my tin oven begins to burn me alive. The white man would never be seen in a place like this. I am trapped and unable to escape from my concrete cage. Cars speed up as they approach Shanty Town in fear that we will attack. To them we are no longer men, but we are animals. Any place is better than this. Poverty surrounds us. The water is dirty with urine and diarrhoea, and our thirst burns our dry mouths. The women have no flesh, just decaying bones. The men have no muscle, just sunken cheeks. Our hunger makes us so mad in this town that we will do foolish deeds for a slice of bread. I will steal for food, and I will kill to protect my family. We have become savages in this Devil's place, called Shanty Town. What happened to the promise of Shanty Town? For now I am trapped. What happened to the promise of Shanty Town? For now I am hungry.

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